

Battle of New Orleans – Pre-Visit Activities

Timeline Activity

Objectives: Students will learn the major events of the Battle of New Orleans and the War of 1812 and be able to put them into a relative chronology. Students will encounter important figures of the Battle of New Orleans and the War of 1812, and think historically about the experiences of these people.

Resources needed:

Timeline cards with major events of the Battle of New Orleans and the War of 1812 (print front to-back and cut out. The cards are color-coded as a tool for students new to timelines; however, the activity can be completed without the cards being printed out in color)
Internet access to do research (optional: for enrichment exercise)

Background:

The Battle of New Orleans was the last major, culminating event of the War of 1812. After many years of struggle where the United States attempted to assert its independence from Great Britain, repeated British attempts to curtail U.S. trade and ongoing political tensions resulted in Congress' controversial 1812 decision to declare war. After months of armed struggle without a clear-cut winner or any land changing hands, the British were eager to get a toehold in the United States by occupying where the Americans would hurt most: the port of New Orleans. Although the British thought it would be an easy target, a rainbow army of American Indians, French and Spanish creoles, free people of color and Americans from all over the U.S. came together to successfully defend the city.

Activity:

Print out timeline cards so the white-faced narrative events are facing up and the color-faced dates of the events are facing down. Use the flip sheets on long edge double-sided printing feature to match events with dates on backside of cards. Shuffle the cards and lay them in a stack. In small groups or as a class, have students read the first event, and place it on the table in front of them. Then, have students read the next event. Did this happen before or after the previous event? (If students are struggling, have them group related events together, and then decide which group came first, and which come later.)

Once all of the cards are laid out, have students flip the cards over to see the date that each of these events occurred, and to see if their relative chronology was correct (If printed out in color, the cards will give a visual hint: if laid out in the correct order they will make a rainbow).

Enrichment Activity:

Each of the event cards has the name of a person or a group of people in **bold**. Have students individually or in small groups pick a person or group of people to research. Then, have students write a journal entry or a short story of the event from their perspective.

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of timeline activity

After years of arguing with Great Britain over trade rights, and to show America's military strength, the Congress of the United States votes to declare war. **President James Madison** signs the bill, and for the second time in the lives of many Americans, the United States is at war with Great Britain.

To weaken the British army, and to scare the **British colonists in Canada**, American forces invade York, Canada (modern-day Toronto). In the days that follow, Americans would burn the city and leave it in ruin before retreating back to the United States. This angers the British and they vow to take revenge.

To get revenge against the Americans for attacking York, the British have invaded the Chesapeake Bay, and have captured Washington, D.C. The White House, the Capitol and other government buildings are burned down, and **citizens of the Nation's Capital** flee.

General Andrew Jackson and his troops of U.S. Army regulars, Tennessee Militiamen and **Native Americans** capture Pensacola, Florida from the British. This prevents the British from being able to attack New Orleans by land, and instead forces them to arrive by boat.

April 27, 1813

June 18, 1812

November 7, 1814

August 24, 1814

Anticipating a British attack on New Orleans, General Andrew Jackson arrives in the city and begins to put together an army. In addition to the U.S. Army soldiers, Native Americans and Tennessee Militia he already has, Jackson recruits **local Creole citizens** and **Free People of Color**, and more militiamen from both Tennessee and Kentucky.

Advancing British army boats defeat the American Navy ships in Lake Borgne, off the coast of Louisiana. This clears the way the British to arrive by water just a few miles away from the city of New Orleans.

The British army, lead by General Edward Pakenham, makes landfall in Louisiana just a few miles downriver from the city of New Orleans. The Americans quickly head out from the city to meet the British army, hoping to drive them back immediately. The skirmish ends in a draw, and the Americans fall back closer to New Orleans.

After the skirmish is over, the American army retreats about two miles closer to New Orleans, at the Chalmette plantation. There, **General Andrew Jackson** oversees construction of a rampart wall to protect his troops in battle, and to make it more difficult for the British to get by.

December 14, 1814

December 1, 1814

December 24, 1814

December 23, 1814

After the defeat in Pensacola, the British Army and Navy, led by **General Edward Pakenham**, gather on the Caribbean island of Jamaica. From here, they sail towards New Orleans, hoping to take the city and control trade along the Mississippi River.

As the Americans are fortifying their position at the **Chalmette family's** plantation, the British fire cannons and guns at them from a distance. The Americans are able to withstand the attack, showing the British that they will have to charge through the Americans if they want to take New Orleans.

British troops, led by **General Edward Pakenham**, march toward the Americans. Although the British have many more soldiers, the Americans have a much stronger position. The Battle of New Orleans begins early in the morning. It is short, but disastrous for the British. They retreat away from New Orleans. The city is safe!

The United States Senate ratifies a peace treaty with Great Britain. After three long years, the War of 1812 is over. The United States has proven its strength as an independent country, and **the citizens of New Orleans** have proven that despite their cultural diversity, they are all Americans.

January 1, 1815

November 26, 1814

February 16, 1815

January 8, 1815

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Putting New Orleans on the Map

Objectives: Students will familiarize themselves with a map of the United States in 1815, and will practice atlas and map skills by marking important cities and regions on a map. Students will identify important water trade routes during this time period, and learn the role that the city of New Orleans played in trade.

Resources needed:

- “Putting New Orleans on the Map” mapping activity sheet
- Colored pencils, crayons or markers
- A U.S. atlas or an Internet connection to do geographic research

Background:

Before the steam-powered riverboat arrives in New Orleans in 1812, trade could only move in one direction on the Mississippi River. Goods would be loaded on to flat-bottomed rafts upriver, and barged down to New Orleans. In New Orleans, the goods would be transferred to big sailing ships that could leave the river and sail across the Atlantic Ocean to bring the goods to markets in Europe and the Caribbean. The riverboat revolutionizes trade in New Orleans. After 1812, for the first time it is as easy to send goods upriver against the current as it is to send them downriver with the current. New Orleans becomes the largest city in the South, one of the most important trading ports in the world, and it opens up a huge section of the United States to settlement.

Activity:

Have students complete “Putting New Orleans on the Map” activity to help them understand the importance of New Orleans’ location. Discuss: how do you think New Orleans’ location as an important trade city affect the culture and diversity of the city? Why do you think the British were so interested in capturing New Orleans during the War of 1812?

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Putting New Orleans on the Map

In 1815, New Orleans was one of the most important cities in the United States. Rivers were the highways of the 1800s, used to move people and supplies all over the world. It was almost impossible to move goods by land in the early 1800s, so even if it was a much greater distance, it was always faster to ship by water.

Using an atlas and the map below, follow the instructions on the second page to chart out trade routes that a merchant would travel in the early 1800s.

What do you notice about the location of New Orleans?

